MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. ON SOME LARGE-SIZED RED PANDAS *AILURUS FULGENS* F. CUVIER

(*With a text-figure*)

The red or lesser panda *Ailurus fulgens* F. Cuvier 1825 is a small carnivore rather poorly known, at least in the wild. It is found in the Himalayas in Nepal, India, Bhutan, northern Myanmar and China (Choudhury 1997, Corbet and Hill 1992). Its distribution in India has been mapped, and an interesting population discovered in Meghalaya (Choudhury 1997). During field surveys in northeastern India since the early 1980s, I have come across innumerable evidences of the red panda, from live animals to skins and stuffed specimens. Whenever I saw a skin or a stuffed animal, I took measurements. Here I report some large specimens, much larger than the known records.

The maximum recorded length of the red panda was 62.5 cm for head and body and 50 cm for tail (MacDonald 1984, Prater 1980). In 1996, I examined a skin at Tura in the Garo Hills, Meghalaya. The panda was shot in Nokrek National Park (approx. 25° 27' N, 90° 18' E) in the early 1960s, but the condition of the skin was excellent. It measured: Head + body length = 73 cm, Tail length = 43 cm (Choudhury 1997). It became the largest known specimen (skin) in the world.

In May 2000, I came across a large skin at Tenga in West Kameng district, Arunachal Pradesh. It measured: Head + body length = 72 cm, Tail length = 50 cm. It was reportedly killed by road workers at Mandla Phudung area (*c.* 27° 16' N, 92° 06' E) in the same district in 1998. While its head + body length was slightly smaller than the Garo Hills specimen, overall length made it the largest ever recorded. However, this record was shortlived.

In May 2000 again, I saw another huge skin at Sangti, also in the same district. On enquiry, I learnt that it had been brought from Chayangtajo area (*c.* 27° 45' N, 93° 0' E) in East Kameng district, where it was killed by the Sulung tribals. It measured: Head + body length = 79 cm, Tail length = 43 cm. While in overall length the skin was the same as the previous one, the head and body were amazingly huge, the largest known in the world so far. Most intriguing was the fact that it still had some whitish colouring on its dorsum, indicating that it was not adult. One could imagine its size had it lived to adulthood!

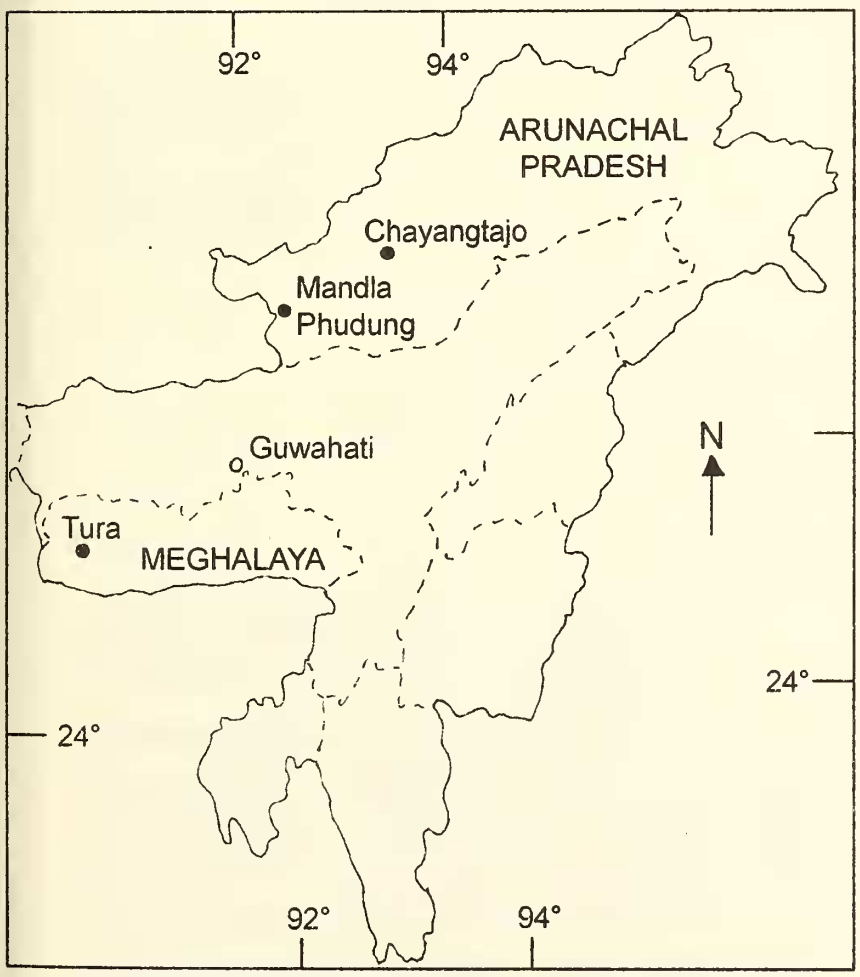

Fig. 1: Map showing the localities mentioned in the text

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Eds — It must be noted that these are measurements of skins and not of live animals or measurements taken before skinning.

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2. HUNTING ATTEMPT BY NILGIRI MARTEN *MARTES GWATKINSI* HORSFIELD, FAMILY MUSTELIDAE,IN PERIYAR TIGER RESERVE, KERALA

On December 16, 2000, a group of 11 persons led by the first author were participating in population estimation of tiger and prey base in the Periyar Tiger Reserve. At about 1000 hrs, we chanced upon a group of four Nilgiri martens *Martes gwatkinsi*, trying to hunt a mouse deer (*Tragulus meminna*), which we watched for about 10 minutes. The wounded mouse deer was moving about in a small pool of water with a steep bank on one side, and sandy dunes on the other sides. The martens had surrounded the pool, but did not venture into it. One marten tried to reach the mouse deer by moving down a root protruding into the pool from the bank.

On sensing our presence, the martens fled into the forest. The second author followed one of them to about 1.5 m, and photographed it on a tree. Soon, however, the animal moved down to 3 m from him, jumped into the undergrowth and disappeared. Meanwhile, one of us took pictures of the mouse deer in the pool. This happened in a rainforest dominated by *Cullenia exarillata*, by a trek path connecting Vellimala and Thamara, at an elevation of about 1,500 m.

The Nilgiri marten is listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, and is endemic to the higher elevations of the Western Ghats. It has been rarely sighted, and even less is known about its feeding habits.

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3. POSSIBLE OCCURRENCE OF TIBET RED DEER *CERVUS ELAPHUS WALLICHI* IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

(*With a text-figure*)

The Tibet red deer *Cervus elaphus wallichi* Cuvier 1823, also called the *shou* or Sikkim stag is a very rare and little known subspecies of the red deer *C. elaphus*. Once it was even thought to be extinct (Thornback 1978). At present, it is known only from southern Tibet (Schaller *et al.* 1996), though its original distribution included Bhutan also (Anon. 1976). During a visit to Bhutan in January 2001, I got reports of its possible occurrence in parts of Thrumshingla National Park, but no evidence was available.

During field survey for wildlife in western Arunachal Pradesh, I could not get direct evidence of the presence of the species, although older people reported a large deer with branched antlers (more branches than those of the sambar *Cervus unicolor*), which used to occur in the north. They called it *shou*. The sambar was not uncommon on the south-facing slopes of the Himalaya, especially in the deep valleys, mainly